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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000070

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, DRL, IRF, GTIP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI HUMAN RIGHTS BODY COMMENTS ON HAIMDAN AL-TURKI CASE, GUANTANAMO, AND TIP

REF: A. 07-RIYADH 2096

[B.](#) 08-JEDDAH 0306

[C.](#) 06-RIYADH 5707

[D.](#) 08-JEDDAH 0099

Classified By: CG Martin R. Quinn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Poloffs met recently with an official of the Jeddah branch of the National Society for Human Rights to discuss a range of human rights issues: freedom of worship, rights of the child, Gaza and TIP. Praising the President's decision to close Guantanamo, our interlocutor expressed concern over the length of the prison sentence and rights of Haimdan Al-Turki, a Saudi national serving a 28-year sentence in Colorado for sexually abusing his Indonesian maid. Portions of the meeting were leaked to the Saudi press. END SUMMARY.

[¶2.](#) (C) HAIMDAN AL-TURKI CASE: Dr. Hussein Al-Sharif, Saudi national and manager of the Jeddah branch of the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR), an independent human rights organization established with Al Saud seed funding (Ref A), raised the matter of Haimdan Al-Turki, a Saudi citizen serving a 28-year prison sentence in Colorado since 2006 for a series of charges that included sexual abuse of his Indonesian maid (Ref B). The Saudi government has formally protested the severity of sentence (Ref A and C), and it is widely maintained in the Saudi media that Al-Turki was unfairly sentenced as a result of the post-9/11 "anti-Saudi backlash."

[¶3.](#) (C) GUANTANAMO: Al-Sharif praised the Obama Administration executive order closing Guantanamo. The issue has been a major agenda point for the NSHR, which has published and widely distributed a report of alleged abuses taking place at the detention facility and sent a letter to the Bush administration requesting the facility's closure (Ref B).

[¶4.](#) (C) GAZA: The humanitarian situation in Gaza was raised by Al-Sharif as well as the Saudi view that Israelis used "disproportionate" force. PolOff assured him that the USG has been doing everything possible to facilitate the entry of relief supplies to Gaza.

[¶5.](#) (C) TIP: With regard to human trafficking, Al-Sharif stated that the NSHR disapproves of the Kingdom's foreign worker sponsorship system, often cited for contributing to TIP problems (Ref C). NSHR inserts itself into issues of sponsors not paying employees and presses the SAG to transfer sponsorship in such instances. Al-Sharif commented that he had never heard of a Saudi employer going to jail for non-payment of wages, remarking further that he was unaware of any SAG-provided training on TIP. He opined that the Shura Council should establish specific criminal sanctions since Saudi judges currently issue opinions without grounding in law.

¶6. (C) FREEDOM OF WORSHIP: Al-Sharif said the NSHR supports the rights of individuals (1) to practice the religion of their choice privately within the confines of home and (2) to bring non-Islamic religious texts to Saudi Arabia, adding that Saudi law does not prohibit either. However, Al-Sharif was reluctant to advocate free and open practice of religions other than Islam.

¶7. (C) RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: Al-Sharif emphasized that combating child abuse is a major NSHR concern, stating that the organization is planning a media campaign against all forms of child abuse. Al-Sharif asked why the United States has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Officers promised to seek Department guidance.

¶8. (C) UNEXPECTED PRESS COVERAGE: Following the meeting, Saudi Arabic daily Al-Madina published an article describing the conversation, likely prompted by Al-Sharif or his notetaker. The article, "American Mission Guarantees Haimdan Al-Turki's Human Rights," states that Al-Sharif raised the case of Haimdan Al-Turki and that US officials assured him that his human rights are being respected. Al-Sharif's appreciation for the closure of Guantanamo is noted along with the mistaken perception that PolOff is an Obama Administration appointee. Previous post meetings with Al-Sharif were not shared with the press.

¶9. (C) COMMENT: In Saudi Arabia it is not always safe to assume that a conversation is off-the-record. Most likely the contents of the post's meeting were leaked to the press so that the NSHR can burnish its public image -- showing that it is pressing the Al-Turki case. END COMMENT.

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